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Eng. 864 Paper Abstract

Dr. Williamson

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**Composing the Sibling:**

**The Need and Use of Sibling Relationships in the 19th Century Women’s Novel**

My goal in this paper is to show the relevance and importance of sibling relationships, both actual and composed in the following 19th century novels: Madame de Stäel’s *Corrine,* Jane Austen’s *Fanny Price* and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein.* What I am going to show is the importance of the sibling relationship in stabilizing identity, in offering an individual value outside of either the parent/child or marital relationships and how those sibling roles offer a space for the opposing sibling to create.

In Austen’s *Fanny Price,* I will be looking at the sibling relationships of Mary/Henry, Fannie/William, and then Fanny/Mary. I want to show how each pairing stabilizes the identity and agency of the other sibling, how they help to move each other’s “story” forward, and how a space is created where an honest “knowing” of the other is permitted and revealed.

In Stäel’s *Corrine,* I will analyze the effects the absent or intermittent sibling has on the other. While this is most evident for Corinne’s perspective, we can see how Corinne’s absence effects and impacts Lucile. Both sisters experience the void of the other’s presence. This void is filled when Julia becomes Corinne’s protégé.

Finally, I will frame Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, as a sibling void using the notion that Frankenstein’s creature is seeking a sister, not an Eve, and that Victor just gets it all wrong…again. I will show how the creature after being denied the connection of a parenting relationship in order to stabilize his fragmented identity, is further denied the grounding connection of a sibling.

# Two additional texts that I will be using are the book, *Disorderly Sisters: Sibling Relations and Sororal Resistance in Nineteenth Century British Literature*, by Leila Silvana May and the sociological article, “The Sibling Relationship in Young Adulthood: Sibling Functions and Relationship Perceptions as Influenced by Sibling Pair Composition,” by Shannon E. Weaver, Marilyn Coleman and Lawrence H. Ganong. As secondary texts, they will provide me with the historical context and literary analysis of the period and a sociological study of sibling relationship and how those relationships function in early adulthood.